

Surárg,
Pakidai

/59 cont./

595 From this list of families one gains the impression that monogamy predominates. But I was assured by my informants that those warriors who thus far have only one wife would be glad to take a second or even a third one, as was customary among their forefathers. The small number of persons in the tribes, however, has caused a shortage of women, so that most of the men are forced to be content with one spouse.

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3. Political Structure

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These low population figures could, moreover, arouse the suspicion that it is not tribes, but only tribal divisions that are involved here, especially on account of the connubium in which they live, or merely groups. The chiefs and war chiefs named, however, told me emphatically that the Surára as well as the Pakidái were formerly large and mighty and distributed in many malokas.

[185] They regard achieving this size again as a goal worth striving for.

622 An institutional chiefdom with a definitely established succession prevails in both tribes. If the chief dies, his next younger brother automatically takes his place. Only if the youngest brother is dead may the first-born son of the oldest brother, who by that time is usually an older man, occupy the office of chief.

624 In addition there is the war chief. This position is not hereditary; rather, the bravest warrior is chosen for it. During peacetimes he has no prerogatives whatever and lives like an ordinary member of the tribe. Only during military encounters does he take over the [622] leadership, while the real chief, as religious head, doctor, and teacher, is protected and does not take part; the same is true for his brothers.

622 The Surára chief Hewemão, very bold and intelligent, is a truly great personality; his orders are respected by all members of the tribe without opposition. When he was still a youth, his father, Xoromão, was killed with two arrow shots by Makuxí /Macusi/ Indians. Hewemão eldest brother, Xaráfma, assumed the succession, but he died of a fever about eight years ago.

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622 influence within the village. A leader's functions are few and ill-defined. Generally, he initiates activities that the

• [701] entire group has already decided to undertake. His major function and concern is with organizing and leading raiding parties and with investigating the village neighborhood when raiders are likely to be present, a dangerous and undesirable

[529] task. Moreover, he represents the village and frequently
[574] initiates feasts to honor other villages, and he often super-
[437] vises the trading that normally follows a feast, permitting enough possessions to pass into the hands of the guests to assuage their greed, while at the same time ensuring that his

[529] followers are not impoverished. Because of his role in
[241] initiating feasts, his garden is usually larger than that of his followers and he produces the greater portion of food

[578] given away during the feast. During club-fights within the
[241] village, the leaders of the factions involved in the fighting
[629] stand by and attempt to keep the fighting innocuous, using both diplomacy and threats to effect a relatively peaceful end to the fighting. When diplomacy fails and someone is badly injured or killed in the fighting, the headmen are the first to start firing arrows at the offenders.

622 The headman's role as leader is enhanced in proportion
721 to the intensity of warfare. Some headmen deliberately seek
554 to prolong wars by spurning offers of peace from their enemies, or go so far as to initiate new raids against some unsuspecting village on the pretext that they are practicing harmful magic against his followers, or simply to abduct
WOMEN.

*621 never get larger than 250 seems to lie in the fact that there
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162 is no military advantage to be gained in increasing village size beyond this point, while at the same time, further increase in size creates organizational difficulties that threaten the internal stability of the village.

*621 Size of raiding parties and tactics of warfare must
722 be understood to appreciate why villages of 250 do not gain
721 military advantages by increasing in size, and why village
701 size can not drop below 40. The median size of Yanomamö villages lies between 80 and 100 people. A village of this size can organize raiding parties ranging in size from about 20 to 30 men, as approximately one-third of the village residents are males between the ages of 14 and 50, the group from which the raiding parties are recruited. As no village leaves the women unguarded when it mounts a raid on its enemies, the size of raiding parties tends to be lower than the number of
*621 eligible men able to raid.¹ Table 4 gives the population
162 break-down of five Yanomamö villages by age and sex. The males between the ages of 14 and 50 comprise 32.5% of the
*621 population (19.6 plus 12.9). Thus, a raiding party comprised
701 exclusively of men from a single village having a total population of 100 will not exceed 33 men; but, the raiding party
721 would include a large number of youths who have no raiding experience, and older men who are not able to move rapidly. These men constitute more of a handicap than an asset to the

¹See Plate 2. [TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 136]

Table 4 Age and Sex Distribution of the Yanomamö Population.¹*621
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Frequency Distribution:						
	Age Intervals					
	0-5	6-13	14-25	26-50	51-75	Totals
Males	55	48	103	68	14	288
Females	36	42	77	60	23	238
Totals:	91	90	190	128	37	526
Percentage Distribution:						
	Age Intervals					
	0-5	6-13	14-25	26-50	51-75	Totals
Males	10.5	9.1	19.6	12.9	2.7	54.8
Females	6.8	8.0	14.6	11.4	4.4	45.2
Totals:	17.3	17.1	34.2	24.3	7.1	100.0

¹Based on residents of Monou-tedi, Bisaasi-tedi, Patanow-tedi, M̄maribōwei-tedi, and Reyabobōwei-tedi. I was not able to get age estimates on a number of individuals in Reyabobōwei-tedi and Patanow-tedi, accounting for the difference in total population given in Table 5, Chapter IV. The sex ratio for the above population is 1.22, and male excess is 9.5%, compared to 1.19 and 8.35% in Table 5.

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[72] effectiveness of the raiding party. As someone must stay home to guard the women, the guards usually come from the too young and too old. Usually, however, one or two 'waitedi' (fierce ones), men who have a great deal of experience in warfare and who would bravely defend the village, also remain behind. Thus, a village of 100 people could, at best,

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[62] organize a raiding party of approximately 20 to 25 men.¹

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721 The smallest raiding party I saw during my field work comprised 10 men. This seems to be the lower limit to the size of an effective raiding party; most raiding parties are of the order of 35-40 men, although I have seen as many as 60 men leave on a raid.² There are several reasons why raiding parties require ten or more men. First, the Yanomamö are not brave warriors; in a party of 10 men, a significant fraction of them would rather remain in the village where it is safer, and these men always look for excuses to drop out of the raiding party before the party meets and the enemy. The usual excuses given are sickness or sore feet. Thus, even in small raiding parties there is considerable dissent among the men, particularly the younger ones. Such problems would be insurmountable if the party contained fewer than ten men, as even the most determined of the raiders would lose his enthusiasm by listening to the complaints and pessimistic comments of the more reluctant members of the raiding party. I accompanied one Monou-tedi raiding party a portion of the way to their objective; most of the younger men in the raiding party complained of having dysentery, malaria, or sore feet. I had promised to give them malaria

¹This presumes that there are no sick or injured men in the village; there are always some.

* [628] ²The larger raiding parties are always composite, involving the members of two or more villages.

701 pills before the raiding party left, but I forgot them.
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721 This almost ended the raiding party, as the younger men
123 jumped on this as an excuse to stay home. The older men,
114 however, forced them into line and severely chastized them for
being cowardly.

701 Raiding tactics also require that approximately ten
721 men be included in the raiding party. The raiding party
725 usually splits into two or more groups when it approaches
the village of the enemy. This increases the probability that
the raid will be successful; two groups are more likely to
confront individuals of the enemy village while at the same
time splitting up reduces the possibility that the raiders
will be accidentally discovered by the enemy. After the
raiders shoot one or more of the enemy, they retreat in a
standardized pattern. Groups of two men retreat a specified
distance, their retreat being covered by two men who lie in
ambush along the trail most likely to be taken by pursuers.
The guarding pair then retreats, being covered by the first
pair who lie in ambush. If the raiding party has separated
into two groups, retreat tactics will necessitate at least 8
men.

721 The purpose of a raid is to kill one or more of the
727 enemy and retreat before being discovered. A raid is suc-
cessful only if one or more of the enemy is killed and none
of the raiders is wounded or killed. When a joint raiding
party from Mahekodo-tedi and Bissasi-tedi raided Riakow's
village in the early '50s to revenge the deaths of two

721 Mahekodo-tedi men and the victims of the 1950-51 treacherous
721 feast, they succeeded in destroying Riakowā's village and
garden, recapturing two of the women abducted by the Shamatari,
killing three men, and abducting Riakowā's son.¹ They did
not consider the raid a success because the Shamatari succeeded
in killing one of the raiders. Again, in 1965 a joint raiding
party comprised of Monou-tedi and Bisaasi-tedi men raided the
Patanowā-tedi, killing one man. One of the Monou-tedi,
Konoreiwā, was badly wounded by the Patanowā-tedi and almost
died. The raid was only partially successful according to
the raiders.

• 701 The tactic of ambush and retreat does not require the
721 participation of large numbers of men. Raiding parties of
60 men, therefore, are somewhat less effective than raiding
parties of 25-30 men, because raiding parties of this size
usually involve the cooperation of two or more villages.

701 Then, the organization of such large numbers of men is a
628 problem, as each village will have its own leader, and there-
721 fore the contingency of raiders provided by allied villages
in a joint raid has its own leadership. Thus, joint raids
are invariably less effective because of the numbers of
men involved and the difficulty of organizing them properly.
The contingency of allies in a joint raiding party is less
enthusiastic about the raid than the group from the aggrieved
village, and if the enemy is not to be found at the site being

[115] ¹Both Barker and my informants gave me an account of
this raid. The two versions were identical.

701 raided, the allies usually insist on returning home rather
721 than pursue the enemy further. In 1965 a joint raid involving
*628 men from Bisaasi-tedi, Monou-tedi, M̄maribōwei-tedi, and
Keyabobōwei-tedi failed to locate the Patanowā-tedi at their
[727] village. The two Shamatari groups refused to go further in
pursuit of the Patanowā-tedi, and the entire raiding party
returned home, against the wishes of the Monou-tedi, whose
dead headman was being avenged by this raid. Occasionally,
721 however, the raiders are all enthusiastic about the raid and
722 the possibility exists that an enraged raiding party may
*621 attempt to drive the enemy from the village. This partially
[623] accounts for the fact that warfare promotes the re-combination
[724] of smaller villages into larger, more defensible ones. If a
raiding party of 60 men descended on the inhabitants of a
village, the village could defend itself adequately only if
there were approximately an equal number of adult men in the
village. This would require that the village be at least as
large as 180 people. Another factor, however, accounts for
the fact that some villages have large populations. When a
group has several enemies, it can raid them more effectively
if it is able to send out raiding parties recruited from
different factions within the village. The same raiders
cannot return all the raids mounted against them and carry on
the business of making a living as well. Again, larger
722 numbers of men are required to defend the village while some
*621 of the men are away on raids, as the probability is higher
that the village will be raided in the interim if the village
has several enemies.

000 has several enemies.

*621 I pointed out that Lower Bisaasi-tedi was not a
 *628 militarily viable village, although its total population
 • 701 falls within the range of such villages. An examination of
 721 the village composition given in Appendix A will show that
 722 the village composition given in Appendix A will show that
 [62] there are only 12 men between the ages of 14 and 50, and not
 all of these would be effective in a raiding party. Some of
 these men would have to remain home to guard the women, re-
 ducing the capability of the village to mount raids against
 enemies even more, as the size of the raiding party would
 have to be smaller than ten men. Thus, Lower Bisaasi-tedi
 depends on assistance from its allies in their warfare and
 could not survive as an independent village. Should their
 enemies (the Patanowā-tedi) begin raiding them frequently,
 they would have to reunite with their agnates, the Upper
 Bisaasi-tedi. As a matter of fact, they did exactly this
 whenever raids from the Patanowā-tedi threatened them. The
 [62] Monou-tedi have 21 males between the ages of 14 and 50, but
 two of these are cripples. Nevertheless, they are much more
 capable of maintaining a separate existence than the Lower
 Bisaasi-tedi, despite the fact that the difference in size
 of the two villages is not great. The significant fact is
 that they have a larger number of men capable of conducting
 *621 raids. However, their size has not permitted them to ef-
 *628 fectively withstand the raids mounted against them by the
 722 Patanowā-tedi, and the Monou-tedi were forced to move to a new
 [36] site by the raids stemming from their enemies. Without the

40 · ADAPTATION

- *621 Village size is an important factor in determining the degree to which a Yano-
- *623 mamö group must depend on its neighbors for military support in the face of raids. Small villages must make alliances to survive. Village size, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, ranges from 40 to 250 inhabitants. Approximately one-third of the village consists of males who are able to participate in the raiding, that is, men who are between 17 and 40 years old.
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- 722 The tactics of warfare are such that a village must be able to field a raiding party of approximately 10 men in order to be able to raid effectively. In addition, when the raiders are away, there must always be a few men at home to protect the women and children. Thus, the military requirements alone seem to demand that a village have at least 15 able-bodied men. As these represent about a third of the group, the minimum village size required by the raiding techniques is 40 to 50 people. I have never seen a village fall below this size in an area where raiding is active, and virtually every village split I investigated took place only when each of the resulting groups contained 40 or more people.

- *621 The upper limit to village size is also determined in large measure by the intensity of warfare. The village of Patanowä-teri, for example, has over 200 people. It was being
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- 726 raided actively by about a dozen different groups while I conducted my fieldwork, groups that raided it about twenty-five times in a period of fifteen months. The Patanowä-teri at one time had split into three groups of about equal size, but raids from their enemies forced them to reunite for common defense. In general, a village will fission after it reaches a population of about 150 because internal feuds and fights are so frequent that peace can only be maintained with great difficulty. A village of 100 individuals, for example, can fission to produce two militarily viable groups of about 50 people each. Only the threat of raids from powerful neighbors will, as in the case of the Patanowä-teri, inhibit the fissioning, and frequently the fission groups will reunite in a single village to fend off the raids of their enemies.
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- *[628] But a small group of 40 to 50 people is not as viable as a group twice that size. Consequently, it enters into alliances with its neighbors.

- *621 FISSON AND SETTLEMENT There is a tendency for the group to attempt to
- 582 maximize its size after it becomes an independent entity. This is done by trying to keep
- 166 all marriages within the group so that there is very little migration of young men and women to other villages after marriage. A small group also welcomes the addition of families from other villages, families that have gotten into fights in their own group and who prefer to leave rather than attempt to patch up their grievances with their kinsmen. Finally, the group tries to attract young men and women from other villages, encouraging them to settle permanently in the group. Rerebawä, for example, is under considerable pressure to remain permanently in Kaobawä's group.

- *621 As the village grows in size and varies in composition, it becomes increasingly
- 598 difficult to keep order and peace. Extramarital sexual liaisons are more frequent in larger
- 837 villages, because the probability is lower that the affairs will be discovered. When the Monou-teri rejoined Kaobawä's group to avoid the raids of their enemies, a bloody club fight developed between two men of that village over an affair one of them had with the other's wife. The culprit waited until the group joined Kaobawä's village before approaching the woman, thinking that with so many people in one village he would not be caught.

By the time a village approaches 100 to 150 people, such fights among women are

The raiders always develop a strategy for attacking the unwary enemy. They usually split into two or more groups and agree to meet later at a predetermined location

132 · YANOMAMÖ WARFARE

726 If there are novices in the raiding party, the older men will conduct mock raids, showing them how they are to participate. A grass dummy or soft log is frequently employed in his, as was the case in the *wayw itaw* held in the village the day before the raiders left. Particularly young men will be positioned in the marching party somewhere in the middle of the single file of raiders so they will not be the first ones to be exposed to danger should the raiders themselves be ambushed. These young men will also be permitted to retreat first. Damowā had a twelve-year-old son when he was killed. This boy, Matarawā, was recruited into the raiding party to give him an opportunity to avenge his father's death. The older men made sure he would be exposed to minimum danger, as this was his first raid.

726 The separated groups of raiders approach the village at dawn and conceal themselves near the commonly used paths to the source of drinking water. They wait for the enemy to come to them. A good many of the victims of raids are shot while fetching water.

Frequently, the enemy is wary and acts defensively at all times when there is an active war going on. Only large groups of people can leave the village, and these are well armed. Raiders will not attack a large group such as this. When the enemy is found to be this cautious, the raiders have no choice but to retreat or to shoot volleys of arrows blindly into the village, hoping to strike someone at a distance. They retreat after they release their arrows, depending on the gossip of other villages to learn if their arrows did find their marks. Rarely, one of the raiders will attempt to enter the village during the night and kill someone while he sleeps. Damowā's younger brother allegedly accomplished this on one raid, but few men are brave enough to try it. Most of the time the raiders manage to ambush a single individual, kill him, and retreat before they are discovered. This is considered to be the most desirable outcome of the raid.

722 The women were nervous, frightened, and irritable while the men were away, and they were constantly on the lookout for raiders from other villages. This is always a time to suspect raiders, since allies occasionally turn on their friends when the women are poorly guarded, abducting as many as possible while their husbands are away.

After several days the women were so frustrated and anxious that fights began to break out among them. One woman got angry because another one, her sister and co-wife, left her to tend a small baby. When the mother returned, the angry one picked up a piece of firewood and bashed her on the side of her head with it, knocking her unconscious and causing her ear to bleed profusely.

726 The raiders had been gone almost a week when Kaobawā and his youngest brother staggered into the village, nearly dead from exhaustion. Kaobawā's pains had gotten so bad that he decided to turn back just before they reached the Patanowā-teri village. He could barely walk by that time and would not have been able to elude pursuers should the enemy have given chase. Shararawā, his brother, decided to accompany him back lest he run into a group of Patanowā-teri hunters, or his condition grow even more severe. Shortly after they had dropped out of the raiding party, Shararawā stepped on a snake and was bitten. The rains had started, and the snakes were beginning to concentrate on the higher grounds, making walking a hazard. His leg began to swell immediately, and he could not walk. Hence, Kaobawā had to carry him out on his back, despite the fact that he could barely walk himself. Carrying him for nearly two days, he managed to reach the Orinoco River. Here, he intended to make a bark canoe and float the rest of

Here, he intended

to make a bark canoe and float the rest of

the way back down, but they located a dugout canoe someone had concealed,³ so they borrowed this and reached home about dark, three days after Shararaiwā had been bitten. He survived the snake bite, but Kaobawā was very exhausted from the trip. 726 (484) (501)

That night an advance party of the raiders returned, chanted briefly with Kaobawā, explaining that they had reached Patanowā-teri, shot and killed one man, and fled. The Patanowā-teri pursued them, got ahead of them at one point, and ambushed them when they passed. They wounded Konoreiwā of Monou-teri, shooting a bamboo-tipped arrow completely through his chest just above his heart. 727 (722) (726)

The next morning the main body of raiders returned to the village, carrying Konoreiwā with them in a litter. They had removed the arrow, but he was very weak and continuously coughed up mouthfuls of blood. They put him in a hammock and tended his fire for him. They asked me to treat his wound. 727 (758) (723)

He lay in his hammock for a week, not eating or drinking all that time—the Yanomamō have a taboo against taking water when wounded with a bamboo-type arrow, and Konoreiwā was slowly wasting away. Finally, I could stand it no longer and made a batch of lemonade. I called for them to gather around, ceremoniously crushed an aspirin into the lemonade, and explained that this was very powerful medicine. So powerful that it had to be diluted with a large amount of water. I then demanded that he take some, which he gladly did, the others not interfering. By then he was so weak that he could not sit up, so I spoon-fed the liquid to him. A knowing glance passed between us as he gulped down the first spoonful of sweet liquid. He ultimately recovered. 727 (758) (758)

The two men who shot the fatal arrows into the Patanowā-teri were both brothers of the slain Damowā. They were killers and had to purify themselves by going through the *amokaimaw* ceremony. 727 (783) (793)

They were given spaces in Kaobawā's *shabono* for their hammocks. The area each man occupied was sealed off from the adjoining houses by palm leaves, and the men had their food brought to them for the week they were confined to this small area. They each used a pair of sticks to scratch their bodies and did not touch the food with their fingers when they ate, again using sticks to transfer the food from the container to their mouths.

At the end of their confinement, the vine hammocks they used while they were on the raid, along with the scratching sticks, were taken out of the village and tied to a particular kind of tree. The hammocks were placed about 6 feet above the ground and separated from each other by about 1 foot. After this was done, the men resumed their normal activities.

Kaobawā felt that he had satisfied his obligation to avenge Damowā's death. The Monou-teri, however, wanted to prosecute the war further and continue raiding. It was at this point that Paruriwā of Kaobawā's group began to emerge as one of the more prominent men in the village. He stepped forward and actively prosecuted the war against the Patanowā-teri, encouraged by the esteem in which the Monou-teri held him. Still, he was not enthusiastic enough for the Monou-teri. On one raid he subsequently led, he elected to turn back and go home when the Patanowā-teri were not found at their main garden. The Monou-teri insisted that the party should continue on until they 726 (701) (721)

³ The canoe was hidden in the brush by Kaobawā's son-in-law, who lives in a village up the Orinoco. He had come to Bimani-teri that day to visit and hid his canoe so that the Bimani-teri would not borrow it.

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Fig. 3-4. Blowing drugs (cheret) on the pulverized bones of Damowé, slain Monoo-eri headman.

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located the enemy, but Paruwé refused to go any further. When he turned back, so did the entire party.

The Monoo-eri and Biawé-eri raided against the Paruwé-eri six times while I lived with them, and each time the preparations for the raid closely followed the description given above. The Monoo-eri remained to their producing site only when the jungle was inundated; only at that time could they exist without the support of their allies. The remainder of the year they had to take refuge with members of allied villages or expose themselves to the risk of being attacked by superior forces by remaining in their own producing garden.

The Monoo-eri also raided the Paruwé-eri without aid from their allies. One of the raids was conducted near the end of the rainy season, and I was staying in their village at the time the raid was held.

A special ceremony took place the day before the raid. The goods containing the ashes of the slain Damowé were put on the ground in front of his brother's house.

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